

cent.

The governor's office released a statement saying May's rate represents 147,068 unemployed persons, compared with 147,229 in April and 138,432 in May 2013.

The state "employment numbers released this morning again show a gradually improving economy, albeit at a

added 1,700 jobs in May while retailers added 900 jobs. Other hirers were employers in administrative support, waste management and remediation services, which added 2,100 jobs; accommodation and food services, 1,200 jobs and social assistance, 1,200 jobs.

15.6 percent while Shelby County had the lowest at 4.4 percent.

Of the 10-county area of central West Alabama, Greene and Perry counties continued to have double-digit unemployment rates with Greene at 11.5 percent and Perry at 11.6 percent.

cades at Northport's Remake Festival of the Arts, is one of the stars in the film, which was shot and edited over about a decade. As he did underneath his pine at Kentuck, Sudiluth paints with mud on boards or other simple platforms, plays harmonica and talks about the forces that

prayng Center itself, which houses the museum. "And now Jack Black is bringing me home."

Branyon lives now in Amagansett, N.Y., but returned to her alma mater, the University of Alabama in 2000 to receive a Distinguished Career Award from

pelo for the premiere. "It was nice to hear Mr. Black and Ms. Margaret talk again, to see Jimmy Lee, to hear it all like it was still going on."

Learn more about Treasures from the Rubble at [www.treasuresfromtherubble.com](http://www.treasuresfromtherubble.com)

## SEWAGE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1B

engineering during recent redesign efforts. By signing off and sealing the plans, the engineers accept responsibility, according to LeFleur, who cited state regulations.

ADEM's role is regulatory and focuses on issuing permits based on planned usage, monitoring the actual usage and enforcing violations when they occur, he said.

The agency head argued responsibility for the plans to fix the problem belongs to the elected leaders of the city, which has a population of roughly 1,800.

Attempts to contact city officials and the project's design firm, Sentell Engineering of Tuscaloosa, were unsuccessful Friday.

The statements by LeFleur came during an Environmental Management Commission meeting Friday in Montgomery, following public commentary by a group of Uniontown residents and supporters who argue a \$4.8-million upgrade and expansion of the West Alabama community's wastewater treatment system was mis-

managed by the city, state and federal agencies and the project's engineer.

The upgrades were an attempt to fix a decades-long issue with overflow from the city's wastewater treatment facility into local streams that are part of the Black Warrior and Alabama River tributaries.

The project's new sprayfield added to help handle treated wastewater remains idle at ADEM's request because the soil at the site is incompatible with its use.

"\$4.8 million later we are still seeing sewage spilled every day," said Adam Johnston of Alabama Rivers Alliance, who spoke at the rally.

Using a combination of U.S. Department of Agriculture grant funds and municipal bonds, the city spent \$4.8 million in 2013 on upgrades and repairs to the wastewater system, which regularly overflows into nearby creeks and streams, as part of a 2008 agreement with ADEM to fix the problems.

The construction of the new field, estimated to cost about \$350,000, was mostly complete before a permeability test was conducted at the site.

In previous comments to

the Tuscaloosa News, John Stevens of Sentell Engineering reported ADEM did not require the test and indicated the agency said a second sprayfield would be an adequate solution.

Representatives from the Black Belt Citizens Fighting for Health and Justice and supporters from the Black Warrior Riverkeeper rallied in front of ADEM's north Montgomery headquarters ahead of the meeting.

The groups' representatives who spoke during the public commentary segment of the meeting were limited to discussing future policy recommendations rather than the status of the plant, which is the subject of ongoing litigation between ADEM and the city.

The suggestions generally called for a more active ADEM during the permitting and inspections process to avert issues similar to those encountered with the Uniontown treatment plant.

Ben Eaton, vice president of Black Belt Citizens, recommended ADEM require all "proper" testing before property can be purchased, completion of testing before construction begins, verification

of information in any reports, more community input, independent inspections of projects, onsite review by ADEM of all permitted projects, and those found culpable for mistakes to be responsible for fixing the issues.

Nelson Brooke of Black Warrior Riverkeeper recommended a better system of checks and balances at ADEM to ensure compliance with permits, better due diligence for projects in the preliminary phases, and more aggressive enforcement of violations.

"The lesson learned here is ADEM permitted Uniontown to discharge on a sprayfield that doesn't work," Brooke said.

Brooke criticized the state agency's handling of the issue, arguing it was inadequate in its enforcement of permit violations.

"The message is you can blatantly violate the permit," Brooke said. "That is really the wrong message to send to the regulated community."

Brooke also argued ADEM did not give adequate consideration of the concerns raised by residents during the public hearings on the new sprayfield ahead of construction.

"The real issue is they have

the ability in the application phase and public comment phase to consider designs," Brooke said.

LeFleur disputed Brooke's characterization of ADEM's role and handling of the project, arguing the regulatory agency had taken extraordinary steps to assist the town and shown sensitivity to its economic realities by not piling on additional fines it can't afford.

"We have gone the extra mile to help Uniontown solve this problem," LeFleur said. "Our involvement has gone far and beyond what it normally does."

LeFleur noted the agency filed a contempt of court petition against the city in 2012 for violating the 2008 consent agreement that required the city to fix the problem within three years. It also filed a cease and desist order over discharges of untreated sewage into local streams.

"To imply no enforcement action has taken place is irresponsible and incorrect," LeFleur said.

LeFleur said options are limited for the municipality in one of the state's poorest regions.

"We have lots of bad op-

tions," he said.

Aggressive enforcement could force the city into bankruptcy or an extreme rate hike for city residents, LeFleur argued.

Funding remains the biggest hurdle.

"What we have been doing is trying to help them find money to get back in compliance," LeFleur said. "It does no good to keep piling on fines."

While the system upgrades helped improve operations, the system is still unable to handle the volumes directed to it, often swollen by storm and ground water, according to LeFleur. The city is considering an alternative solution of constructing a pipeline from the plant to transport the treated wastewater to the Black Warrior River or a tributary capable of handling the effluent, according to LeFleur and Eaton. The estimates for the work are as much as \$2.6 million.

The Environmental Management Commission didn't take any action on the issue Friday, but Vice Chairman W. Scott Phillips asked LeFleur to look into the situation further and advise the board of the options.